

Civitas Advises City of Prague on Strategies for New Economy

Following June reSITE presentations, Mark Johnson invited back to Czech Republic



The historic city of Prague, Czech Republic, is exploring strategies for staying relevant in a new economy in a three-day workshop with Mark Johnson of Civitas.

Denver, Colorado – August 18, 2014 – How does one of the world’s most intact Renaissance cities stay relevant and compete in the new millennium? This week, [Mark Johnson](#), founding principal of Denver-based urban design studio [Civitas](#), is in Prague helping the Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR) strategize possible solutions to that question. “They realize they’re behind the curve and want to find ways to get ahead of the curve,” explains Johnson, who was invited back to meet with IPR representatives and the mayor and city council of the UNESCO-listed city for a three-day urban planning workshop after attracting their attention at the recent [reSITE](#) conference held in Prague in June, where he served as a moderator and made several presentations.

Focused on the theme “Cities and Landscapes of the New Economy,” the June 19-20, 2014, reSITE conference brought together more than 50 international leaders from the urban and landscape design world and more than 500 guests to exchange ideas for making cities more livable, competitive and resilient. Founded in 2011 by Director Martin Barry and based in Prague, reSITE acts as a catalyst for social action and innovative leadership and is at the forefront of innovative changes in Central and Eastern Europe including in the Czech Republic – fostering collaboration, dialogue and social innovation between the public and experts in fields of design, finance and development, municipality leadership and community advocacy.

“It was impressive to see the level of discourse and interest in Eastern Europe about how their cities and countries can advance into the future,” says Johnson about his June reSITE conference experience. “Europeans are more conversant on issues than we tend to be. Their feeling is that Prague and similar cities in the East have a tremendous potential but it’s not clear how they capture it.”

Central to the design philosophy of Johnson's firm, Civitas, with [30 years](#) of success evincing real-world urban change in venues from L.A. to Afghanistan, is the tenet that projects are ultimately "about them, not us." And transforming that philosophy into real built projects that communities love and use around the globe has made the Civitas team experts at community engagement, participating in countless hours of community forums, roundtables, kitchen table sessions, even door-to-door canvassing. So Johnson, who loves nothing better than a fresh challenge, is intrigued by the mindset of Eastern Europeans, whose long history of top-down communist governance makes Civitas's approach of listening to the people seem foreign.

"How do you engage a community that's used to being told what to do – who don't have a history of having a voice in policy decisions?" asks Johnson. "That's where we need to start."

"Prague is currently undergoing rapid and significant changes in urban planning, which entails opening up to the public and welcoming everybody to discuss and deal with city development," states the Preface for materials prepared for the workshop with Johnson by the IPR, which has selected two very different case studies of potential development areas to illustrate "the wide range of planning issues" faced by the city. The case studies include considering Boulevard Letna, an area at the edge of Prague's former Baroque fortification that was developed mainly in the 20th century and incorporates a train station and brownfield, as a potential transportation hub and gateway to the city. The second case study addresses the East City area, four villages on the southeast periphery of Prague being considered for the creation of a new Metropolitan Park and appropriate planning to ensure healthy development.

With a core purpose of "creating healthier cities," Civitas is an idea-based practice of urban designers, architects and landscape architects engaged in strategic planning for urban change and project design for built works. A consultancy and a design studio, Civitas advises on a wide range of strategies for re-imagining urban life and places. For more information, visit Civitas online at www.civitasinc.com.

Media contacts: iLana Fowler, Civitas, Inc., marketing@civitasinc.com, 303.571.0053; Darla Worden, WordenGroup Public Relations, darla@wordenpr.com, 303.777.7667

###